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Angle Gallery, Amsterdam, C//BACK UP

Alan Murray

Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh

Lauriston Place, Edinburgh, Scotland EH3 9DF

+44 (0)131 651 5717

a.murray@ed.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Since 1989 my artwork has initially criticized certain existing instruction manuals and later created new manuals and user guides. This work has been developed using a Fine Art rationalization. This paper will examine some key issues of my practice as a reflection towards the potential empowerment of the user.

Keywords

Instruction manuals, Guides, Art, Design and Squash.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1989 I have been making artwork that has become more and more applied. This strategy was chosen for two reasons. Art is 'reactionary' and my work is a direct reaction against artists who become 'mini curators' within a greater curatorship. These artists are collectors of interesting artifacts and become 'pointers' to interesting phenomena'. The artwork made solely for museums has become less interesting to me than artwork that does its job in the 'real world' first and then enters the museum with a potentially 'deeper and more connected story'.

There has also been a movement by some artists to use a simplified pragmatist approach to art making; 'knowledge is only meaningful when coupled with action'. Indeed by doing things themselves and temporarily disengaging the abstract, the artist will shed new light on simple matters. (*Figure 1*).

In 1989 I made my first instruction manual work and my attempts were initially to challenge specific companies to improve their manuals. My most recent artwork provides an example of how a guide might be designed with the knowledge and experience of an expert translated through a beginner's eyes and their blossoming experience.

Achilles Heel

In 1989 I made a 'Krups Espresso' artwork. I examined a Krups Espresso coffee machine and suggested changes I would make to the instruction manual. The changes made were mainly based on consistency (the glass carafe is called the 'carafe', 'jug', 'glass jug' 'jug'). Additionally in the Dutch version, the manual suggested that the User should remove the filter holder *before* releasing the boiler pressure by opening the steam outlet; potentially very dangerous. I proposed to add an illustration to the manual (*Figure 2*)

which would help Users dispose of the used coffee from the Filter Holder before inserting another filter to allow the machine to make steam to froth the milk for, for example, a cappuccino.

Compared to the box the coffee machine was purchased in, the instruction manual is a poor product with mistakes, inconsistencies, poor translation, bad design and difficult accessibility. This is because essentially the manual is 'post sales information', whereas the box is potentially 'pre-sales information'. Therefore I considered the manual to be industries 'Achilles Heel' as it was a company's obligation (maybe even their moral obligation) to produce a good manual.

Steam Irons

In 1991 I made a series of works with household steam iron instruction manuals. I purposely purchased the Black and Decker steam iron from the U.S.A., the Calor steam iron from France, the Morphy Richards steam iron from England, the Philips steam iron from the Netherlands and the Rowenta steam iron from Germany (*Figure 3*). I suggested changes to the manuals so that they were: (a). Consistent and safe and (b). Specific for the machine I had bought (I always bought the most basic model of the range and I did not want to read about features I did not have when trying to understand what my machine was capable of).

Initially I re-made the Philips steam iron manual (HD1461) and exhibited it. It was exhibited as a pile of manuals in the gallery (*Figure 4 & 5*). The problem was that none of the visitors to the exhibition understood what I had done. It was perceived as a 'Duchampian ready-made'. I decided to make new works for the steam iron instruction manuals, which would be 'criticism boards'. You could see the original manual behind the illustrated proposed changes I would make.

The proposed changes were printed onto clear plastic and the original manual was fixed to the plastic (*Figure 6 & 7*). Whilst exhibiting the criticism board I realized that I was falling into the trap of making artwork solely for the art consumption of the art world, and for the work to do its job properly the criticism boards should be exhibited in the design offices of the original steam iron manufacturers. I arranged a meeting with Peter Keagh (Chief Product Engineer) and Chris Thompson (Marketing Director) at

Morphy Richards in South Yorkshire. The conversation was recorded with a hidden microphone (full conversation transcript – Appendix 1).

The conversation has been exhibited (*Figure 8*) and the artwork sold. It is an interesting documentation between a Romantic young artist who felt that he could change the world by unilaterally challenging industry, and a manufacturer who was not too eager to deal with how poor their manuals were. Indeed Morphy Richards did change their manual as a reaction to my criticism. Unfortunately the revised manual was fundamentally not much better than the original. It was where the manual was within the hierarchy of a company that was important. My challenge was not merely to point out the existing faults (although this was a clear conceptual stance as far as an art strategy goes) but I would have to *make* an artwork that raised the instructional guide to a higher level.

The Guide-to-squash

In 2002 I saw a squash match between two top squash players at ‘Squash City’ in Amsterdam’.

I decided then that I was to make a guide to the game of squash. It is not often that somebody decides that they will become obsessed about an activity before they have even tried it. This has the advantage that you are both a complete beginner (seeing and translating everything from complete beginners eyes) and you are very focused on your goal; to make a guide to the game of squash. Moreover, my beckoning obsession would be based on an artistic rationalization:

- For the last seven years I have been working as an obsessed amateur, building a guide to the game of squash. I was a complete beginner to squash and worked from the first day with one of the top players and coaches; Australian Liz Irving. The other part of the plan was that my own game (I play and train intensively 3-4 times per week) should grow with the guide. The ‘performance’ element of this project and the almost impossibility of achieving a good level in this keep, me, the ‘obsessive Amateur’ busy.
- The rules of squash have an ‘Achilles Heel’ in that you may only be given a ‘let’ if it is perceived by the referee that you could have got to the ball in the first place. This coupled with the fact that squash was initially a Gentleman’s game has meant that the rules have always been on ‘catch-up’ and the referees are at the centre of much of the controversy. Most decisions are often very ‘subjective’.
- Obsessed Amateurs treat leisure not in a passive way, but in an active way. Something to get involved in. ‘Soft Leisure’ is passive, ‘Hard Leisure demands participation which can lead to sacrifices and frustrations.

- ‘Professionals’ have a ‘cut-off point’. They make agreements about what they are going to deliver and their aim is to reach those deliverables, no more, no less. The Amateur does not have to stop; they can go on and on until they have had enough, which for the obsessive might be (hopefully) never.

Getting Involved

The Guide-to-squash (originally <http://www.guide-to-squash.org>) (*Figure 9 to 13*) was the No. 1 site for squash coaching on the Internet (viewers and prominent position). It has been supported by the W.S.F (World Squash Federation) since December 1999. At its busiest, the guide (not including the Streaming Games activity) had 18,000 hits per hour. One of its busiest days for the streaming games server was 23/11/2003. When viewers start to watch a match and stop watching a match a line of information is sent to a text file. When the activity for the 23rd of November is opened in Microsoft Word, it generates 6,651 pages using an A4 page at 10pt text.

I now play competition squash at ‘First Class Level’ (*Figure 14*). My own level is the equivalent to the beginning of the ‘Advanced’ section of the Guide-to-squash.

SUMMARY - Artist to be designer to be user

Many artists have become ‘mini curators’ within a greater curatorship. Consequently some artists collect artifacts and become ‘pointers’ to interesting phenomena’. Is it possible that an artwork’s research activity can have a meaningful life and role in the world before it enters the museum, so that it has a deeper and more connected story?

Alan Murray has a simple and pragmatic approach to art making; ‘knowledge is only meaningful when coupled with action’. Indeed by doing things himself and temporarily disengaging the abstract, he hopes to shed new light on seemingly simple matters. In 1991 he made a series of works with household steam iron instruction manuals challenging industry to make better manuals.

Art that positions itself in an applied arena can develop meaningful research that, by its hybrid nature, reflects on both the applied and the artistic.

Furthermore it may be possible for the artist to be designer to be user, based on overlapping interests in materials, technologies and practices. When a practitioner works in another profession they become, by definition, an amateur. Historically obsessive amateurs have been the creative force that has begun and fuelled revolution (eg. the Lunar Society of Birmingham). Engineers are looking to bring a creative and playful element to their practice alongside standardisation and exploitation. Artistic research can show the way.

Is there an alternative for splendid isolation?



"Artists create a space where infinite possibilities almost come true. Some of them want to go one step further and demonstrate that important solutions can be realised.

The art world's pursuit for the 'new' can be directed to support collaboration. If this doesn't happen, the artist's space will become an alienated arena for comfortable entertainment. Get involved."

Alan Murray, artist

Omission

communication institute for contemporary art p.o. box 21073 3001 ab rotterdam tel +31 10 411 44 01 fax +31 10 476 93 32 e mail omission@unica.nl

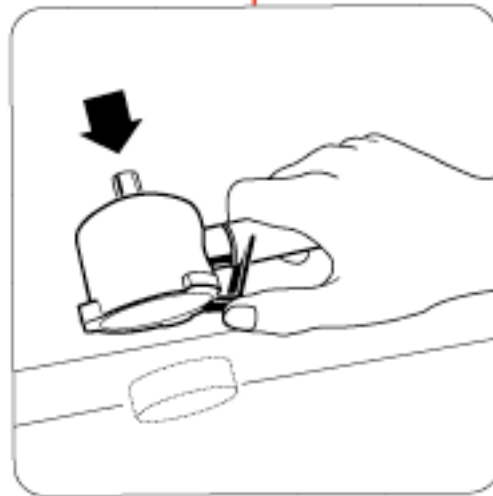
Figure 1- Archis Magazine article, March 1997

Before removing the filter holder for cleaning, ensure that the boiler is no longer under pressure by opening the steam outlet as a check before opening the water container lid. When removing the filter holder, keep the filter strainer in the filter holder.

Making Cappuccino ¹³

This appliance can be used not only to make espresso coffee but also to foam the milk needed for cappuccino.

When removing the filter holder, keep the filter strainer in the filterholder.
(When tapping out the coffee, the filter strainer can be held in place using the plastic marker).

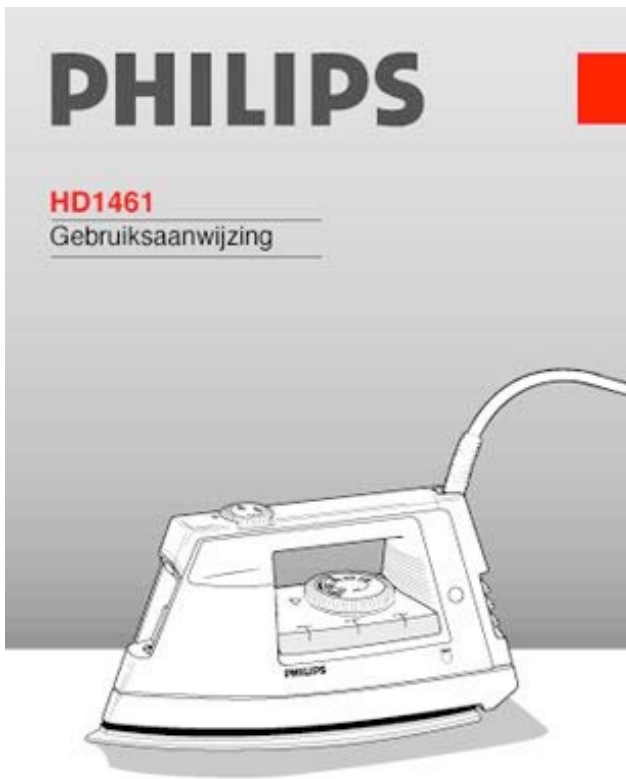


13

Figure 2 – Krups Coffee Machine suggested changes 1989



Figure 3 - Black & Decker, Calor, Morphy Richards, Philips and Rowenta steam irons bought 1991



PHILIPS

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Figure 4 - Corrected Philips Instruction Manual 1991



Figure 5 Original Philips Instruction Manual 1991



Figure 6 - Black and Decker Criticism Board 1992

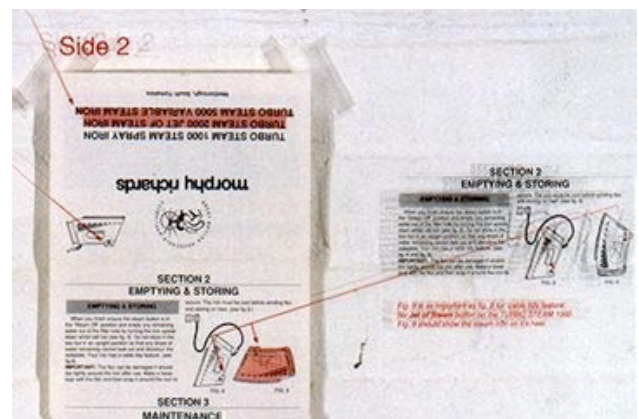


Figure 7 - Morphy Richards Criticism Board 1992

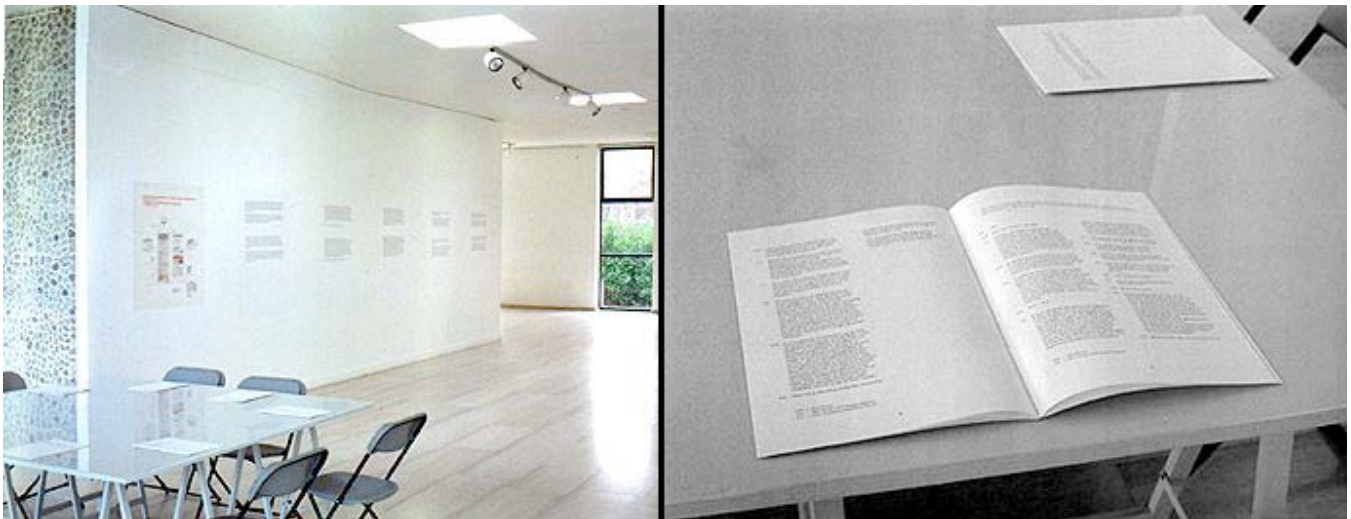


Figure 8 - Morphy Richards artwork exhibited Musea Deurle, Gent, Belgium.

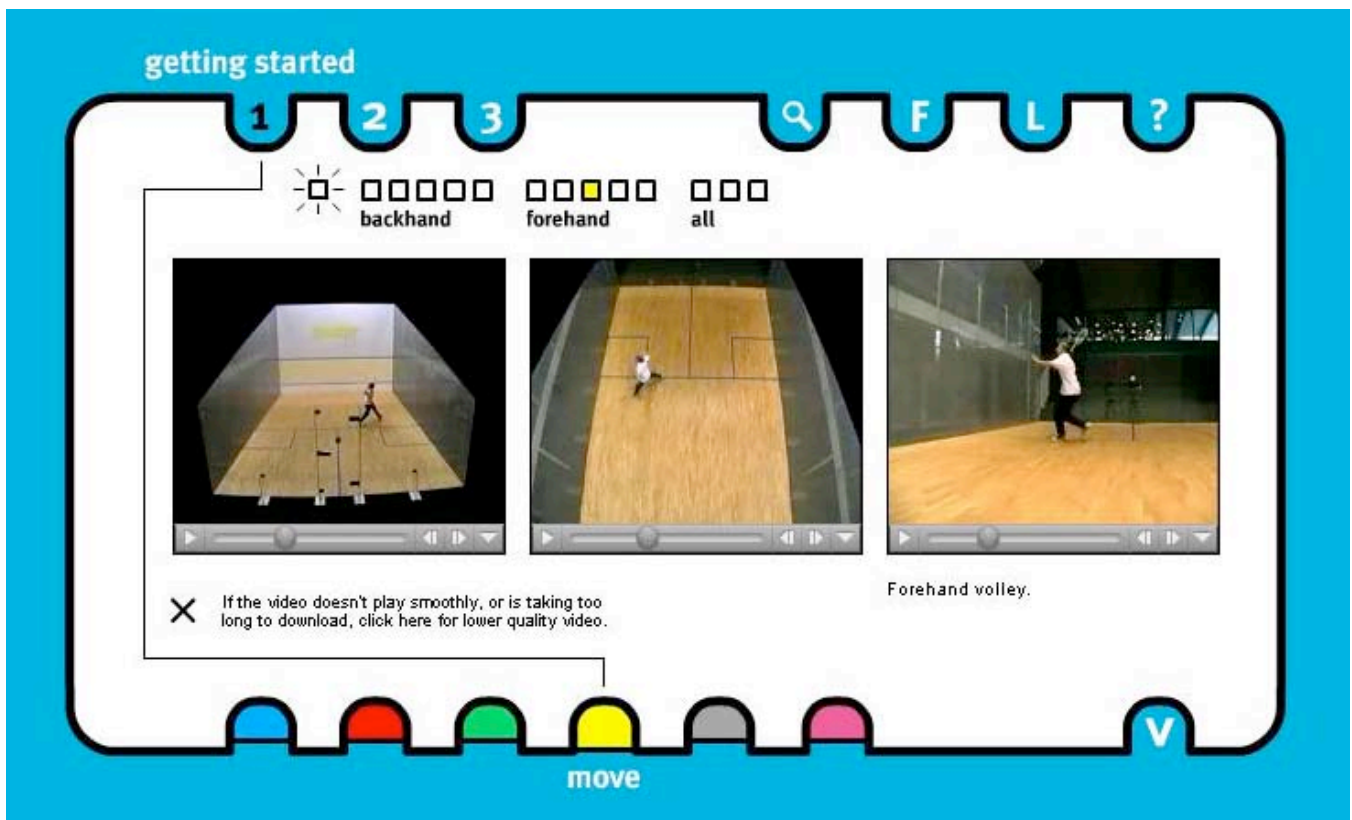


Figure 9 - Guide-to-squash.org - 'Getting started' move section

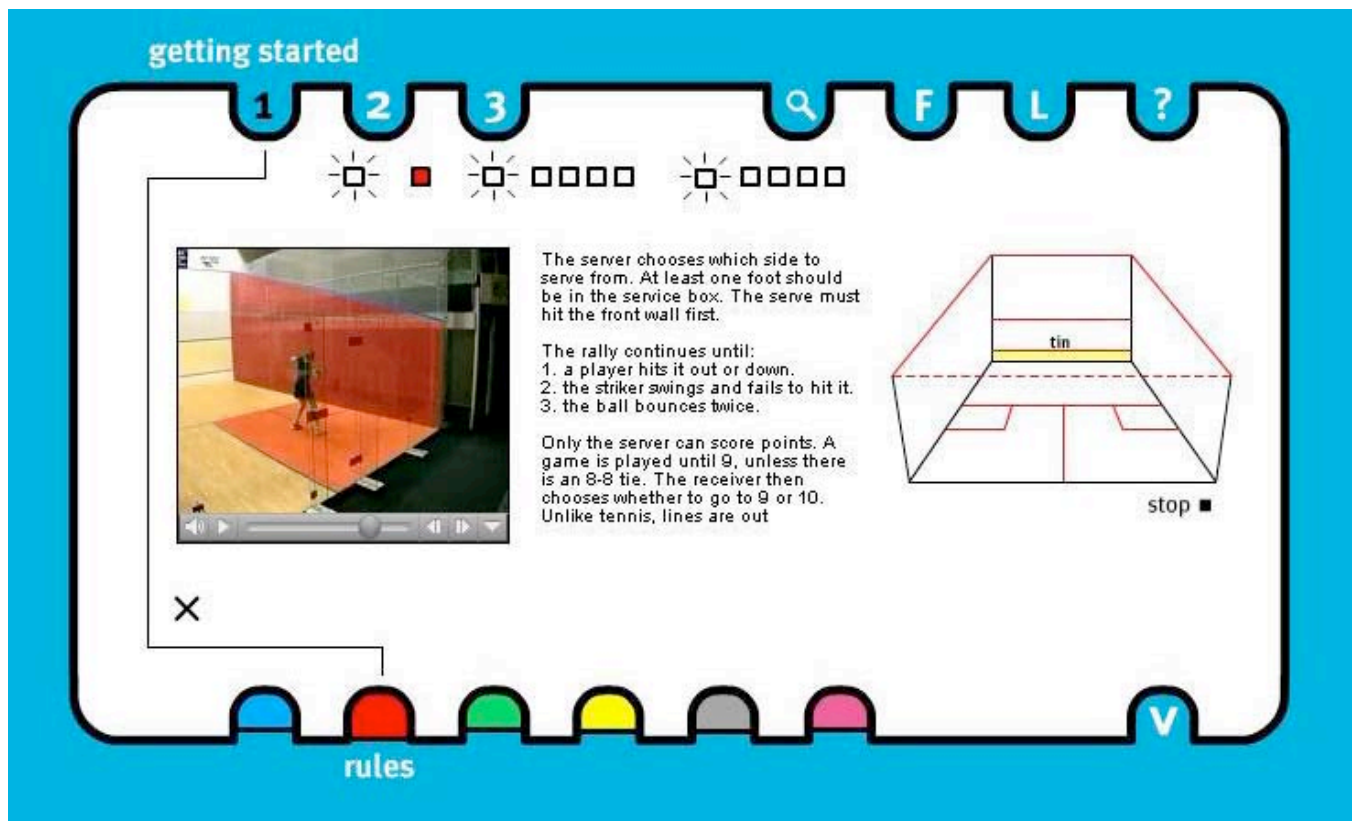


Figure 10 - Guide-to-squash.org - 'Getting started' rules section

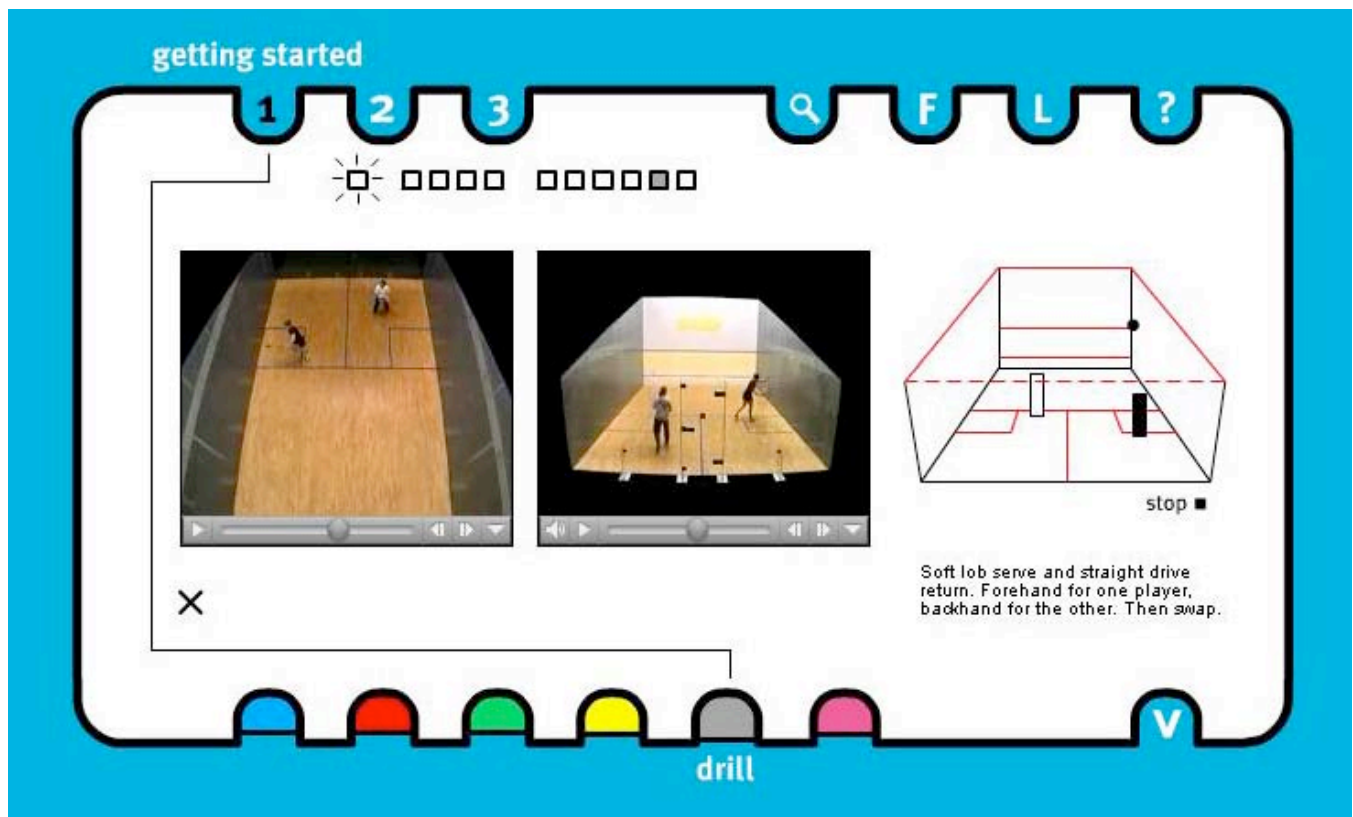


Figure 11 - Guide-to-squash.org - 'Getting started' drill section

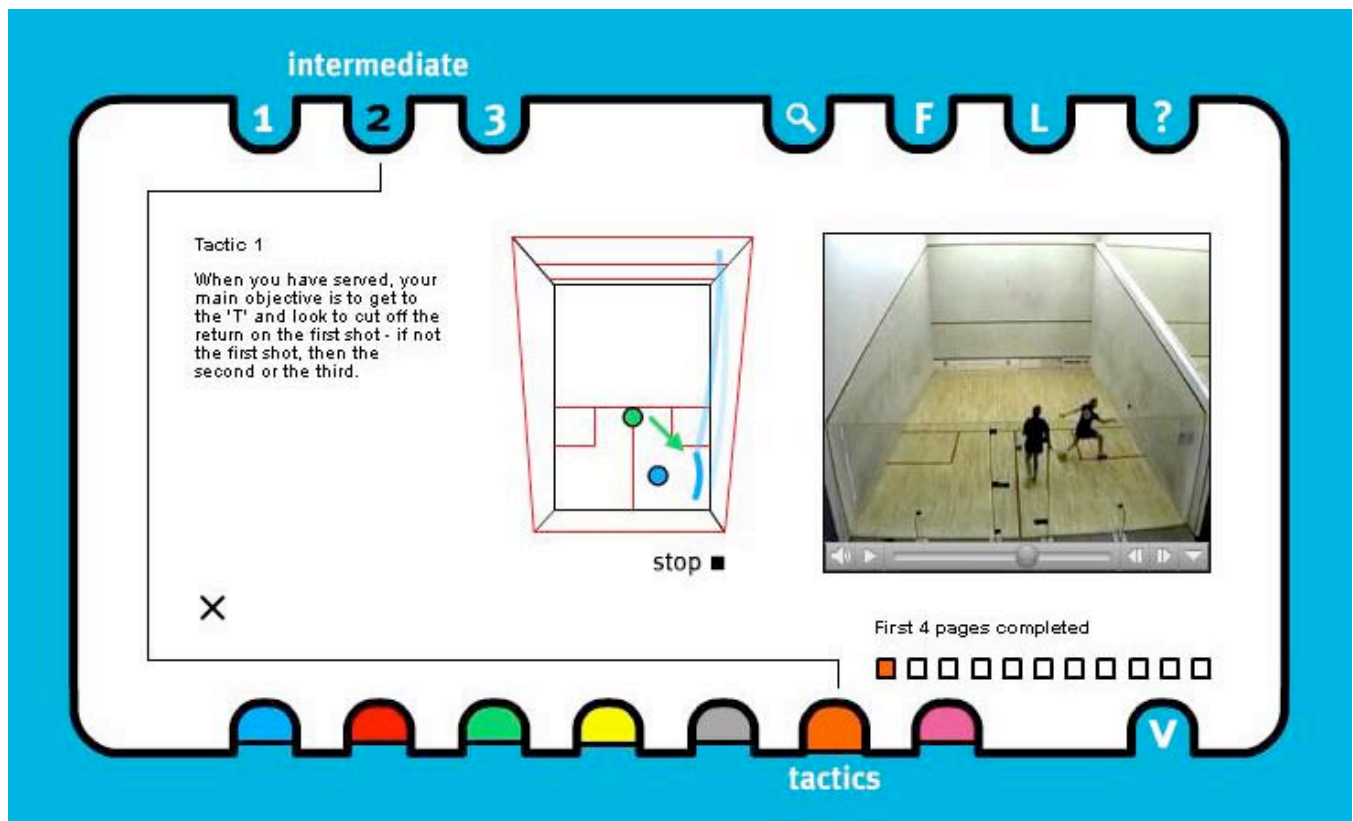


Figure 12 - Guide-to-squash.org - 'intermediate' tactics section

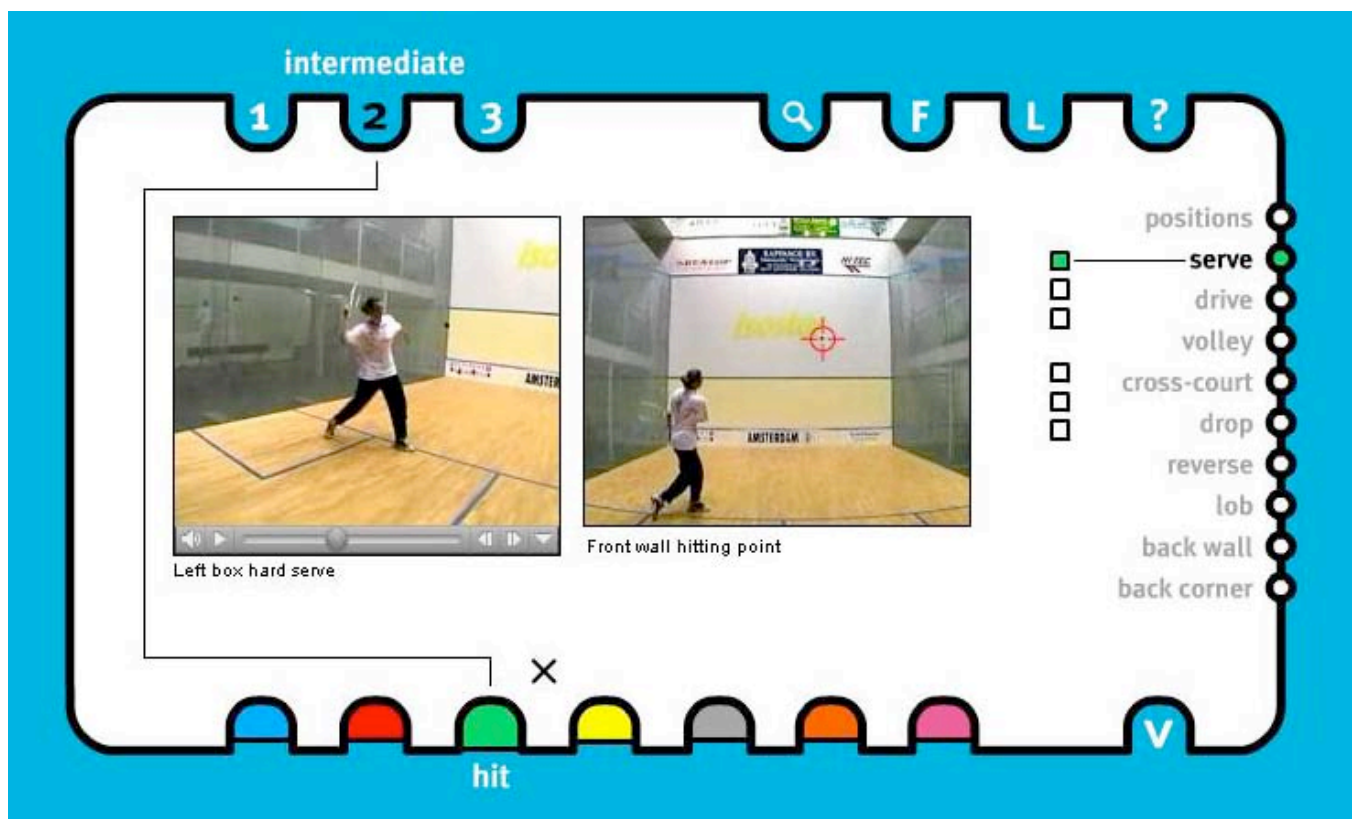


Figure 13 - Guide-to-squash.org - 'intermediate' hit section



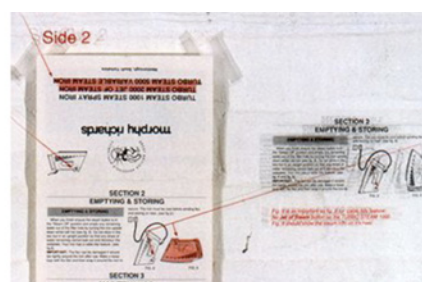
Figure 14 - Personal development videos 2001 until 2005



Figure 15 - photo shoot for Miser and Now Art magazine, London 2006

At the beginning of October 1991, Alan Murray contacted Morphy Richards (British Electrical Manufacturers based in Mexborough, South Yorkshire) and asked whether he could exhibit his display board (a criticism of the instruction manual for their Turbo Steam 1000 steam iron) in the design offices where the original instruction manual was made.

Morphy Richards agreed to meet him on the 16th of October. The following text documents the talk between Alan Murray, Peter Keagh (Chief Product Engineer) and Chris Thompson (Marketing Director). Both Peter Keagh and Chris Thompson were unaware that the conversation was being recorded.



P.K. Hello.

A.M. Alan Murray, Hi.

P.K. How are you?

A.M. Fine, how are you?... *Putting work onto desk....*
This is what I have been doing. I am an artist and I have been working in Holland on a project with instruction manuals. I have been working with products like yours and with companies such as Calor, Philips, Rowenta and Black & Decker...

P.K. An information service?

A.M. Well yes, in a way. I have been looking at various steam iron instruction manuals, examining them, finding the faults and problems I have with them and then suggesting through display boards like this, the changes I would make to the manual.

P.K. There are two people who are involved with the instruction manual, Chris Thompson, the Marketing Director, and me. Could you hang on for a minute, I think Chris would be interested in this. Could you give me a minute to go and find him?

A.M. Of course.

P.K. goes off to find C.T. Returns without C.T. who will join us later.

OK. I am specifically interested in steam iron instruction manuals. This display board shows the problems that I have with your instruction manual. On one level I have problems with bad grammar such as this section here... *points to part of display board which suggests there are three grammar mistakes in one section...* On another level, I suggest that the instruction manual should be totally specific to the model of steam iron in the box. If I buy the most basic steam iron in the range, I do not have to be confronted with the luxury model when I read the text or look at the diagrams on the instruction manual.

P.K. Well I can say now that that's not feasible... *laughs.*

A.M. With this work, one part of my statement is, that I want to make you aware that your approach to your instruction manual is being observed. I have examined the instruction manual, (the fundamental link between manufacturer, object

and consumer) and I suggest that you do not take full responsibility for the document which explains how to use the object that you produce. I would like to exhibit this notice board... *points to the notice board on the table...* in the design rooms where the original manual was designed. Then in a few weeks, I would like to return and talk with the designers and discuss my aims, the problems I have with their work and any problems they may have with my work.

P.K. I still can't get to the bottom of this, why are you doing this? I can't understand what you get from this. It seems like you are doing it for nothing, that you don't get anything from it.

A.M. Well, I do get something from it. As an artist you can do a lot of things, paint paintings, make sculptures, take photographs - all kinds of things. I think it is important that an artist investigates the visual symbols and information around us. I think art is about communication. The fact that I use an instruction manual to make a piece of art shows the importance that I attach to instruction manuals. In fact, I think I take them more seriously than you do.

P.K. Well, I have only been with this company for a few weeks, and I think that this instruction manual is awful. I thought that you would have been coming here today and saying, 'that's an awful instruction manual and I have a better design, do you want to buy it?'

A.M. At the moment, I think that it is more important to point out the faults that you are producing and selling. Rather than for me to come along with a new design; which might again be infected with your flawed attitude somewhere along the line. My investigation of your instruction manual is supposed to highlight this deep rooted flaw.

P.K. This was designed by a Product Manager - so we have a format. The Product Manager can change what things should go into it, not a designer. Then, it goes to a print house. In the print house they simply block it out. They don't design it, they just simply block it out and block it in, in sections. They don't have such an overall design, they just try to fit all the bits of information on the paper. Then, they change the mistakes on the proof if there are any. Then it's printed. As you know, or you won't know, with industries and companies the instruction manual is the last

A.M. = Alan Murray

P.K. = Peter Keagh; Chief Product Engineer

C.T. = Chris Thompson; Marketing Director

thing that gets done. The job is finished and you still haven't printed the manual. Nobody takes any real interest in the manual. People don't take any interest in the opportunity. Even I have a great problem with manuals.

A.M. My point is, even if the consumer never looks at the manual or even throws it away as soon as he buys the product, the manual should be correct and safe, even if it is never read. Some of the manuals are quite good. The Philips manual is very comprehensive, two colours and well thought out. But even that has a couple of spelling mistakes. I cannot imagine the same thing happening in an advertisement for the product. In fact, the box that each steam iron is sold in has a full colour picture of the exact model that is in the box. I think that the box is part of the pre-sales information (advertising) and the manual is post-sales (obligation). You are the only company which uses a general format. This covers the whole range and has a specific colour sticker of the model inside the box, pasted onto the outside. All the other manufacturers print a totally specific box for each different model they produce.

P.K. We have three different models in this range. We sell approximately three hundred and fifty thousand irons. That means that each model breaks into that figure. Certain models are more popular than other models. This means that one of those manuals, if they were different for each model, may have a run as little as fifty thousand per year. The Philips manual is printed in Singapore and printing out there is much cheaper than here. If we were printing our manuals in Hong Kong, (we do have some products that come from Hong Kong) we would have a different manual for each different model. It would cost us nothing. It would only cost us for the different layout, I suppose. We try and make one manual for all the irons, for cost purposes. If the manual costs more, then the price of the iron increases.

A.M. But surely, the price of the iron would not increase at all by taking more care to produce a better manual. I do not believe that if the printing costs were negligible, you would produce a specific manual, for each different model. You probably send internal information within the company which costs as much to produce, as a specific manual would cost to make. Surely a specific manual should take

priority. Couldn't the small increase in cost come from the advertising budget?

P.K. The manuals are formulated from the Marketing Department, so they are the responsibility of the Marketing Department. I have a responsibility to make sure that they are technically and legally correct, so that, there is nothing on there that the company can be sued for. All the wiring information should be in accordance with the relevant regulations. Between the Marketing Director and myself we are not particularly happy with the way the instructions are. We actually have a coffee machine, where the instruction manual is so bad, that we have had to put a letter into every box explaining to people, 'Thank you for buying this wonderful coffee maker, it needs a bit of technique to use it.' We do this so people don't throw it away because the manual is bad. We are trying to develop a formula for the instruction manual that makes the manual 'user friendly'. That makes it more easy to understand and will make the customer more likely to want to read it. I read instruction manuals at home, but I think it depends on the person who is going to read them. But if you are going to give someone something to read, you've got to make it as simple as possible for them. I mean, this one is not too bad, but some of the writing on some of them is unbelievable.

P.K. points to diagram on display board and asks why I have suggested changing the position of the steam iron from resting on its sole plate to standing on its heel.

A.M. Your instruction manual tells you to never rest the iron on its sole plate, yet your diagram shows the iron doing just that. I rotated the diagram so that the iron is resting on its heel.

This is the first contact that I have had with you to exhibit this display board, criticising your original design. I am not looking for any money, I am not looking for a job. I want to suggest that, I, as an artist, can approach you, explain my position and exhibit an object which is the evidence for this statement. All I ask you to do, is to listen and if you agree with any points I make, change your manual accordingly.

P.K. Sounds Wonderful. I always wanted something for nothing... *Laughs...* Well, you can certainly leave your work here.

A.M. = Alan Murray

P.K. = Peter Keagh; Chief Product Engineer

C.T. = Chris Thompson; Marketing Director

A.M. Is it possible to install the display board in the design office where the original manual was designed?

P.K. Just give me a few minutes and I will see what I can do.

Leaves the room. Returns with Chris Thompson the Marketing Director.

Could you explain to Chris what you have been explaining to me?

A.M. For the last two years, I have been working on a project using steam iron instruction manuals as my object. Each manual has been examined and a display board has been made for each one of the different manuals. The corrections have been made in the national language of each company. The French part of the Calor manual has been corrected, the German part of the Rowenta, the English part of the Morphy Richards. The steam iron has been bought in the country of the company's origin. The Black and Decker was bought in New York, the Philips steam iron was bought in Amsterdam, the Morphy Richards in London. The suggested changes are firstly to make the instruction manual specific to the steam iron in the box, and secondly to make the steam iron consistent and safe. I would like to exhibit each one of the respective display boards, in each of the different company design offices where the original manual was made. Hence this display board... *points to display board on the table...* for your Turbo 1000 steam iron which I would like to exhibit in your design office.

C.T. Why are you doing this then?

A.M. I am an artist and I feel that this is an important field for me to investigate. I have a platform - the platform of art. I feel very positive about what can be achieved, using this platform. I approach you as an independent. I am not looking for work or money. You cannot buy me off and I cannot be controlled by you. I bring you a display board and ask you to exhibit it. If you choose not to, then I will record that as your response to my work. If you display my work and change the manual as a result of my intervention then I will record that as a result. As far as the instruction manual goes, I think that it's one of the most interesting and important objects in the 1990's. It symbolises the fundamental link between object, consumer and industry.

Advertising is something different. The instruction manual is almost the company's obligation. I think that the company's attitude to this obligation can also gauge the attitude they will have when they are faced with important decisions that industry has to make. My control of the manual is an analogy to the way I would like to check the intentions of industry.

C.T. So you don't want any money for this then?

A.M. No, nothing.

C.T. You want to put it on the wall in our offices?

A.M. Yes.

C.T. Having done that, where do you go from there?

A.M. I would hope that your designers would look at the work and then, in a couple of weeks time, I would like to return and have another talk with you about your attitude to my work. The actual display board and your response to my work may be exhibited and published in the future.

C.T. So how do you make your money then, how do you support yourself?

A.M. I teach every now and then in various art schools...

C.T. And what do you teach?

A.M. Fine Art. Also, for the last year I was sponsored by the Dutch Government.

C.T. What did the Dutch Government want from you in return?

A.M. Nothing in particular. The money was given after I had explained this project. They were interested in the project so they gave me the money to complete the project.

P.K. *Talking to C.T...* I think it is quite difficult for us to comprehend. He is not trying to get anything from us. At first, I thought he was some kind of spy. In fact, I think we should check that there are no microphones in the screws... *points at screws on display board and laughs. Talking to A.M...* We could put it... *points at display board...* in the office upstairs. Could you prepare it so we can put it up there ourselves?

A.M. = Alan Murray

P.K. = Peter Keagh; Chief Product Engineer

C.T. = Chris Thompson; Marketing Director

A.M. Yes, I suppose so.

P.K. It's just that we can't let you up there because there are a lot of projects that are on the go which we can't let anyone see.

A.M. So what kind of room is it, will it be possible to screw it to the wall?

C.T. excuses himself as there is a phone call.

P.K. Yes, it's a kind of creative studio with all kinds of things pinned to the wall that the designers work from. We will just move a few of these things around and screw your thing to the wall. Things are moving around on those walls all the time. If you can find some way of attaching those things to the back... *points at the original manuals behind the display board...* and then I can take the whole thing up and just screw it to the wall with four screws.

A.M. Is it possible to pin this information sheet up, which gives my name and address and the date I will return in case anyone from the office would like to contact me before then?

P.K. No problem.

A.M. I must just fill in the day that I can see you again on this form... what date would suit you?

P.K. Let's see... well how about a week today?

A.M. Wednesday the 23rd of October?

P.K. Fine. Getting back to the manual. I feel that the manual should be part of a product education to the customer and that's why I feel that the organisation belongs to the Marketing Department. They are the people who provide the information, so really, all the information for the manual could be gathered as the product is being designed. But they still tend to be the last thing that people do. We make our own instruction manuals to keep the costs down. You can spend a fortune on an instruction manual, I mean, there are people who are experts on instruction manuals and you can give your instruction manuals out to these people, for them to make a product that people can use. We tend to sit down here, with me and the Marketing Department and an engineer comes and has a look at it.

A.M. Is it the same people who deal with the instruction manual, who also deal with the advertising within the company?

P.K. Yes, exactly the same people. I mean Chris the Marketing Director, he's got three product managers working for him and his assistant. One of those product managers is totally responsible for everything associated with irons. He is responsible for determining what irons we should be selling, what irons we should be developing, to the graphic presentation of them, the colour, the boxes that they are put in and the marketing information that we put out; everything. Obviously, he has to be aware of what our competitors are doing. The instruction manual would be one of the things we would like to improve on, in comparison to our rivals...

C.T. returns. A.M. speaks to C.T.

A.M. I wondered whether I could supervise where the display board went in the design office?

P.K. If you can find some way of fixing the original manual to the back of the display board so that I can take it all up in one piece I will find somewhere in the office for it to go... *talking to C.T.*... though I don't particularly want to organise it if it is your department.

C.T. Is it?

P.K. Yes, traditionally instruction manuals are your responsibility!

C.T. Oh, I thought they were yours!

C.T. and P.K. laugh.

A.M. OK... *explaining to C.T.*... I have said that I will come back in a weeks time and if anyone wants to contact me before then, I have put my name and address on this sheet.

C.T. Can I just ask one question concerning copyright? If you leave this with us we don't want to find ourselves in a position where our copyright is compromised. I mean, we are in the process of developing instruction manuals which are our property and we have a copyright. It is fine to advise and improve and rationalise, in fact we have a project on, to do just that. We ourselves, believe that our instruction manuals could be improved. Now I don't want to get into

A.M. = Alan Murray

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the argument of you saying that we have stolen your ideas. If you would rather walk away from this now...

A.M. It's my hope that you will change the mistakes in your instruction manual because of my intervention.

C.T. So you're not looking for any payment for that?

A.M. No.

C.T. No financial arrangement or anything like that?

A.M. No nothing. If my intervention, makes you reconsider your attitude towards the way you have produced your instruction manual, then my work has been successful.

Both C.T. and P.K. laugh.

C.T. Have you had any problems with people understanding what you are doing at other companies?

A.M. You are the first company that I have approached with one of my display boards. I have display boards for Philips, Calor, Black & Decker, and Rowenta. So next year I will try to visit each one of those companies just as I have visited you. I even have problems convincing people in the art world, that what I do, is art.

P.K. So, will you then take these instruction manuals and make an exhibition of them?

A.M. Yes.

P.K. Is this conversation we are having now part of the art process?

A.M. My whole contact with you is part of the art process. The first part of the process was to make the display boards. The second part is to document your reaction to them. The third part will be to exhibit the display boards along with a documentation of your reaction to them.

P.K. OK. Good... *C.T. and P.K. laugh...* Like I said if you prepare the work...

C.T. Yes, I mean we can't let you up there.

A.M. No.

P.K. So you basically want an interface, you want us to react to what you have done?

A.M. But if you don't want to react, then that will be your reaction. When I contacted you I didn't really know whether you would even see me, so it's up to you.

P.K. I don't know about a reaction, they might not notice it up there... *laughs...* and what you are basically saying is, that the instruction manual should be specific to the steam iron you are buying. Therefore most of the changes on this board are making that point... *points to an example on the display board.*

C.T. We would say frankly, that, that was not economic for us to do. We do realise that there has to be a better way than we have used here, of making a manual for several models.

P.K. Maybe the instruction manual should say; Turbo 1000 specific, Turbo 2000 specific and Turbo 3000 specific and the figures for 1000 and 2000 have to be in a league table or something, rather than this statement on our manual which just says somewhere, 'all the features may not be included on your iron.' So I don't think that we will gain a great deal by exhibiting your board, but I am quite happy to put it upstairs on the wall. If you would have said that, 'the writing is too small,' then, I think that would have had a greater priority than some of the things you have suggested.

A.M. I could not justify changing the size of letters at this stage, as that would have made the manual larger, which could mean that it is not as easy to use when balancing it on an ironing board, whilst trying to iron. There will be a comparison made, though, when all the manuals are shown together in an exhibition. You use letters between the sizes 5 and 8 points, Philips don't go below 9. Calor try to use one manual for twelve different models on one A4 black and white sheet of paper. I'm sure people will compare the different manuals when they are on the wall.

P.K. Right, have you got all you need to get it ready to go on the wall? I will go upstairs and clear a space for it. I'll be back in a few minutes.

P.K. leaves the room and A.M. prepares the display board. Later P.K. returns, they check the time A.M. will return the following week and P.K. takes the work away.

A.M. = Alan Murray
P.K. = Peter Keagh; Chief Product Engineer
C.T. = Chris Thompson; Marketing Director

Alan Murray returned to Morphy Richards on the 23rd of October, but Peter Keagh asked whether he could keep the display board for another week, as he was busy with an open day for potential buyers. Murray returned two weeks later.

P.K. Hello again.

A.M. Hi. How was your open day?

P.K. Terrific. We had some smaller conference rooms upstairs that we knocked into one big conference room and we've built all new displays with themes for the products displayed. For instance, we have a new range that we are trying out that have farm animals on them. Pigs and sheep and hens. So their display was a farmyard scene with bales of hay and all kinds of farmyard objects.

A.M. The pictures on the products are a strange phenomenon aren't they? I remember reading that the bramble scenes on the sides of Russel Hobb's toasters and kettles used to increase the sales by fifty percent.

P.K. Well, I used to work for Russel Hobbs and we used to complain that we had to continue producing these things. But it seems that a lot of people don't want the 'clean line' modern kitchens that the designers would like them to have, they want flowers and things. You only have to go into Marks and Spencers, I mean look at Marks and Spencer's Harvest range, people seem to want this. Anyway, your 'thing'...

A.M. 'Thing'... *Laughs*.

P.K. I don't think it has been a great success. I don't think many people have looked at it. I think our instruction manuals are particularly 'not good'. But I think that to make them specific for each model, would push the prices sky-high. I mean, the cost of that paper... *points at instruction manual...* is approximately 4p, somewhere between 2 and 4p to produce, and we have about three hundred thousand a year to make. Within that range, there are three models, so if you start to make one hundred thousand of each, instead of three hundred thousand of one, the prices go up. The perfect situation is that we can find an instruction manual which combines a user friendly layout and enables the consumer to distinguish one product from another.

A.M. Would the person who worked on that manual have got a chance to see my work?

P.K. Yes, he would have done. I mean, we have made a note of all the changes you suggest.

A.M. Is it worth your while to change the other mistakes like grammar mistakes and misleading diagrams?

P.K. It is worth our while and we will change the grammar mistakes. They should have been changed at the pre-printing stage.

A.M. Is it too late for that now?

P.K. No, the grammar mistakes will now be changed.

A.M. As a result of this?

P.K. Yes, as a result of this. They haven't been picked up. Sometimes people write to us, or sometimes we do checks ourselves and the mistakes are corrected. What this company doesn't have, but it is going to have from now on, is one man, a man from Glen Industries, who works on all the instruction manuals for all the products. The instruction manual tends to be the last thing that gets done. A lot of our manuals are written by people who don't know how to write instructions. Now, we are going to have someone who knows the field and will produce a suitable format which will serve all our products.

A.M. Do you think, that this man from Glen Industries is going to come up with a better product? Or, if his field is already instruction manuals, will he just make another manual as difficult to read as the rest?

P.K. We will initially use him and see what he comes up with.

A.M. Do you think he knows about the 'zap factor'; about attracting people with the appearance of the manual, to help them digest the information?

A.M. = Alan Murray

P.K. = Peter Keagh; Chief Product Engineer

What does he think about the narrator being re-introduced to manuals, to counter the dry technical quality that usually puts people off when they pick up the manual? Do you think that he will consider the research, which says that, when you introduce one extra colour to an area within the manual, then that area, attracts 32% more interest than if it only had one colour?

P.K. Well, I would hope that he will have an attractive formula which will answer a lot of these criteria.

A.M. I would be interested to see what he produces. Maybe when he has produced his first manual, I can come and see you again. We can then discuss the details of that manual, comparing it to the time and cost spent on the design of the box that the steam iron goes in?

P.K. We are going to re-do the boxes. At the moment, we make a box that all three steam irons fit into, which has a picture of each different steam iron stuck onto the box. Whether this will be the method in the future, or we will have a different box for each iron is a question we have to ask.

Conversation tails off and A.M. leaves with display board.

A.M. = Alan Murray

P.K. = Peter Keagh; Chief Product Engineer